

# Tropenbos International Ghana

Making knowledge work for forests and people



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## It's Official! TBI Ghana gets another five years

The Tropenbos International (TBI) Programme has been extended for another five years following the approval of a new programme proposal by the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation. Ghana remains one of six countries where this new TBI Programme will be operating. This brings TBI Ghana into its third phase since its debut in May 2000.

The TBI Ghana Programme has successfully ran two five-year phases; using an integrated strategy of research, capacity building, communication and dialogue to contribute to sustainable forest management in Ghana. The programme works in partnership with local and international institutions and utilizes the full potential of networks to facilitate interaction between topics of the international and national forest agendas.

Over the years, TBI Ghana has supported forest policy processes in Ghana including efforts leading to the rebirth of the Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy (2011), Climate Change and REDD discourses, Voluntary Partnership Agreement, Forest Investment Programme and developing alternatives for illegal chainsaw milling through multi-stakeholder dialogue.

This new phase (2012-2016) will augment these past accomplishments but will have a slightly different focus and approach. Projects and activities related to the themes of *Landscapes* ('ecosystem management', 'values and payments mechanisms') and *Chains* ('sustainable international trade' and 'local trade') will be highlighted. However, crosscutting issues including 'good governance', 'climate and biodiversity' and 'international policies' will continue to receive the Programme's attention. Interestingly, TBI Ghana will be prosecuting the same projects concurrently with other TBI country programmes for comparative results.

This new phase, like past ones, is already benefiting from a rigorous programme development process that involves multiple stakeholders to identify key problems related to the themes and topics. At the moment, series of meetings on the programme development have been held with our closest partners and experts to generate ideas for consideration and refinement.



## Local communities to produce legal lumber for the domestic market

Local communities will soon be producing lumber to shore up the volume of legal lumber supply for the domestic market. This is to be made possible as Tropenbos International Ghana implements a project that seeks to link local communities to forest concession holders to produce legal lumber under the FAO/ACP-FLEGT Support Programme.

Conventional sawmillers are at the moment not supplying enough to meet the yawning gap between domestic supply and demand for wood. This has partly created space for the proliferation of illegal chainsaw production that now supplies about 84% of lumber on the domestic market. Though chainsaw lumber production is wasteful and illegal, the activity enjoys widespread acceptability and, in some cases, inclusion of local communities due largely to the immediate livelihood benefits and opportunities it offers. Forest concession holders however have access to legal timber and are engaged in logging and supplying of logs to the wood processing mills in Ghana. Its members (forming the Ghana Timber Association—GTA) are seriously constrained by lack of market for logs of lesser used species which are not popular on the export market and therefore not wanted by the export-oriented sawmills in Ghana.

To find alternatives to illegal chainsaw milling and to increase the volume of legal lumber supply, forest stakeholders in Ghana under the aegis of TBI Ghana have proposed a policy that allows artisanal millers to join selected sawmills in supplying legal lumber for the domestic market. TBI Ghana in conjunction with its partners including the Timber Industry Development Division of the Forestry Commission, is therefore piloting this project to build the capacity of local communities in artisanal milling to process lesser-used species and convert logging residues produced by forest concession holders to usable products. The Ghana Timber Association has expressed strong interest and willingness to work with local communities in artisanal milling given the needed support. The project spanning a twelve-month period beginning January 2011 is being implemented in eight communities drawn from Bechem, Goaso, Begoro and Kade Forest Districts in Ghana.

Beyond facilitating partnership between local communities and forest concession holders, the project is also

expected to clarify the concept of artisanal milling and develop models for its operationalisation. The project will also build capacity of local actors to participate in a monitoring system to be developed for tracking lumber meant for the domestic market. This will be an adaptation of the Wood Tracking System developed by Ghana's Forestry Commission for the implementation of Voluntary Partnership Agreement.

It is anticipated that linking up the actors this way can provide communities with legal alternative livelihood support, improve turnover for forest concession holders, reduce timber waste, improve forest health and make legal lumber available for the domestic market.



TBI Ghana signed a 'Letter of Agreement' with the Food and Agriculture Organisation Office in Accra on Tuesday January 17 2012 for the provision of the project

## Hope for timber tree growing farmers

Timber tree growers under the Modified Taungya System (MTS) in Ghana can now look forward to receiving a share of benefits that accrue from trees they planted and tended on degraded forestlands. This follows arrangements by the Forestry Commission (FC) to register MTS farmers and sign benefit sharing agreements with beneficiaries.

With support from the Food and Agriculture Organisation, Ghana's Forestry Commission has partnered civil society organisations to complement her efforts in acquiring credible data towards the signing of benefit sharing agreements with farmers. Tropenbos International Ghana has been contracted to undertake a compilation of data of about 30,000 farmers in the Offinso and Mampong Forest Districts of the Ashanti Region. The task also includes organizing MTS farmer groups and building their capacities



in rights, responsibilities and benefits sharing arrangements in the Modified Taungya System. Under the MTS, farmers receive portions of degraded forestlands to grow food crops alongside planted timber tree species during the early years of plantation development.



Farmers are entitled to 100% of the benefits from the agricultural crops, mostly a mixture of cocoyam, plantain, maize, and vegetables. However, benefits accruing from the sale of timber trees would be shared as follows: Forestry Commission (40%), the farmers (40%), the traditional landowners (15%) and the forest-adjacent community (5%). Though acceptable, farmers feel insecure about the benefit sharing arrangement since no formal agreement is in place to offer the requisite legal backing. As a result, some farmers abandon the trees while others destroy the trees in favour of their food crops, a situation the FC does not have adequate capacity to monitor regularly.

Currently, it is estimated that nearly 100,000 hectares of MTS plantations have been established across the country through the involvement of over 100,000 rural farmers since the launching of the MTS. However, signing of benefit sharing agreement has become tardy due partly to inadequate resources and staff constraints within the Forestry Commission. Civil society organisations have therefore been roped in to take care of these bottlenecks. It is expected that the benefit sharing agreements of the Modified Taungya System when consummated would help secure farmers' renewed commitment in support of sustainable forest development in Ghana.

## Boost for MSD process as a means of securing legal lumber in support of VPA implementation in Ghana

Since 2007 Tropenbos International and partners including Ghana's Forestry Commission and the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana have benefited from European Union (EU) support for the provision of a project that seeks to develop alternatives to illegal chainsaw lumber in Ghana (the Chainsaw Project). Among other things, the project adopted multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) as one approach to arriving at possible options.

Informed by research, MSD brings all relevant stakeholders together to debate related issues, build consensus and negotiate solutions. One significant achievement of the MSD toward forest policy processes in Ghana is the recommendation jointly made with the Timber Industry Development Division of the Forestry Commission that artisanal millers should be made to join sawmillers in



supplying legal lumber for the domestic market in a sustainable manner.

This proposal captured the attention and interest of Ghanaian legislators when the Parliamentary Select Committee for Lands and Natural Resources twice met to further discuss the policy option.

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission have since taken on the recommendation for decision making. This policy option is expected to benefit the implementation of the on-going Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) which was signed between Ghana and the EU to improve forest law enforcement, governance and trade. **(Continue from next page)**



## Boost for MSD process (cont'd)

Following its successful outcome, actors now reckoned the MSD as a sure way to solicit stakeholder commitment and support for actions that emanate from participatory decision making. Ghana's Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the EU for instance have applauded the MSD as a participatory platform that discusses options and evolves mechanisms addressing the social, political, economic and ecological dimensions of the VPA. In view of this, the EU has provided further funding for a second phase of the Chainsaw Project with the theme *"Supporting the integration of legal and legitimate domestic timber markets into Voluntary Partnership Agreements"*.

Among other things, this phase of the project is expected to promote viable livelihoods in poor forest-dependent communities, and ensure adequate supply of legal timber on the domestic market in conformity with the sustainable production capacity of the forest resources and the socio-economic development of forest-dependent communities.

The second phase (2011-2015) launched on 26 October 2011 in Accra, Ghana, will continue to broaden the multi-stakeholder platform to discuss domestic lumber issues and support the implementation, by stakeholders, of the outcomes of the dialogue in policy and practice.



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***"By making knowledge work for forests and people, Tropenbos International contributes to well-informed decision making for improved management and governance of tropical forests. Our longstanding local presence and ability to bring together local, national and international partners make us a trusted partner in sustainable development."***